

108TH CONGRESS  
1ST SESSION

# S. CON. RES. 78

Condemning the repression of the Iranian Bahá'í community and calling  
for the emancipation of Iranian Bahá'ís.

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IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

OCTOBER 30, 2003

Mr. LIEBERMAN (for himself, Mr. MCCAIN, Mrs. FEINSTEIN, and Mr. BROWNBACK) submitted the following concurrent resolution; which was referred to the Committee on Foreign Relations

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## CONCURRENT RESOLUTION

Condemning the repression of the Iranian Bahá'í community  
and calling for the emancipation of Iranian Bahá'ís.

Whereas in 1982, 1984, 1988, 1990, 1992, 1994, 1996, and 2000, Congress, by concurrent resolution, declared that it holds the Government of Iran responsible for upholding the rights of all Iranian nationals, including members of the Bahá'í Faith;

Whereas in those resolutions and in numerous other appeals, Congress has deplored the religious persecution by the Government of Iran of the Bahá'í community and has condemned the execution by Iran of more than 200 Bahá'ís and the disruptive imprisonment of thousands of others solely on account of their religious beliefs;

Whereas Iranian Bahá'ís are not permitted to elect their leaders, assemble or organize as a community, operate religious schools, or conduct other religious community activities that are guaranteed by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, adopted and proclaimed by the United Nations General Assembly Resolution 217(A)(III) of December 10, 1984;

Whereas the continued denial of Bahá'í property rights by the Iranian Government is demonstrated by the confiscation by the Iranian Government of a multitude of Bahá'í community and private properties;

Whereas the Government of Iran continues to deny individual Bahá'ís access to higher education and government employment, in addition to denying recognition and religious rights to the Bahá'í community;

Whereas because Bahá'ís have been banned from teaching and studying at Iranian universities since the Islamic Revolution, Bahá'ís established the Bahá'í Institute of Higher Education, or Bahá'í Open University, to provide educational opportunities to Bahá'í youth using volunteer faculty and a network of classrooms, libraries, and laboratories in private homes and buildings throughout Iran;

Whereas in September and October of 1998, officers of the Ministry of Information, the intelligence agency of the Iranian Government, arrested 36 faculty members of the Open University;

Whereas on July 19, 2002, Iranian Revolutionary Guards systematically disrupted student qualifying examinations for the Open University in 9 different districts by videotaping the proceedings, questioning the students, and confiscating examination papers and Bahá'í books;

Whereas the use of arbitrary arrests, suspended sentences, and short-term detentions against the Iranian Bahá'ís have become widespread;

Whereas as of June 2003, 4 Bahá'ís remain in Iranian prisons solely because of their religious beliefs: 1 serving a life sentence on charges of apostasy, 1 serving 4 years on charges of participation in Bahá'í activities, and 2 sentenced to 15 years imprisonment on charges of association with Bahá'í institutions;

Whereas on October 10, 2003, the Norwegian Nobel Committee awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for 2003 to Shirin Ebadi for her efforts involving democracy and human rights, including advocating equal rights for the Bahá'í community in Iran;

Whereas the conclusions contained in the report of October 13, 2003, by the General Affairs and External Relations Council of the European Union, conveyed the continuing concern of the European Union about the violations of the Bahá'ís' right to freedom of religion, and urged the Iranian Government to comply with both the recommendations made in June 2003 by the United Nations Working Group on Arbitrary Detention and with the recommendations made in August 2003 by the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination concerning injustice, particularly in relation to education, property rights, and employment; and

Whereas in the 2003 General Affairs and External Relations Council report, the European Union urged the Government of Iran to expedite reform on many fronts, while recognizing the meetings held in 2003 and the planned meetings that have been welcomed by the Government of

Iran, to be an important step toward progress: Now, therefore, be it

1       *Resolved by the Senate (the House of Representatives*  
2 *concurring), that Congress—*

3           (1) continues to hold the Government of Iran  
4       responsible for upholding all the rights of its nation-  
5       als, including members of the Bahá'í community, in  
6       a manner consistent with Iran's obligations under  
7       the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, adopted  
8       and proclaimed by the United Nations General As-  
9       sembly Resolution 217(A)(III) of December 10,  
10      1984, and other international agreements guaran-  
11      teeing the civil and political rights of Iranian citi-  
12      zens;

13          (2) condemns the repressive anti-Bahá'í policies  
14      and actions of the Government of Iran, including the  
15      denial of legal recognition to the Bahá'í community  
16      and the basic rights to organize, elect leaders, edu-  
17      cate youth, and conduct the normal activities of a  
18      law-abiding religious community;

19          (3) expresses concern that individual Bahá'ís  
20      continue to suffer from severely repressive and dis-  
21      criminatory government actions, solely on account of  
22      their religion;

23          (4) urges the Government of Iran to permit  
24      Bahá'í students to attend Iranian universities and

1 Bahá'í faculty to teach at Iranian universities, to re-  
 2 turn the property confiscated from the Bahá'í Open  
 3 University, and to permit the Open University to  
 4 continue to function;

5 (5) urges the Government of Iran to implement  
 6 fully the conclusions and recommendations on the  
 7 emancipation of the Iranian Bahá'í community made  
 8 by the United Nations Working Group on Arbitrary  
 9 Detention and also to comply with the recommenda-  
 10 tions made in August 2003 by the Committee on the  
 11 Elimination of Racial Discrimination;

12 (6) urges the Government of Iran to extend to  
 13 the Bahá'í community the rights guaranteed by the  
 14 Universal Declaration of Human Rights, adopted  
 15 and proclaimed by the United Nations General As-  
 16 sembly Resolution 217(A)(III) of December 10,  
 17 1984, and other international covenants of human  
 18 rights, including the freedoms of thought, con-  
 19 science, and religion, and equal protection of the  
 20 law;

21 (7) calls upon the President to continue to—

22 (A) assert the concerns of the United  
 23 States Government regarding—

24 (i) the violations by the Iranian Gov-  
 25 ernment of the rights of Iranian citizens,

1 including members of the Bahá'í commu-  
2 nity;

3 (ii) the support by the Iranian Gov-  
4 ernment of international terrorism; and

5 (iii) the efforts of the Iranian Govern-  
6 ment to develop nuclear weapons and ac-  
7 quire weapons of mass destruction;

8 (B) emphasize that the United States re-  
9 gards the human rights practices of the Govern-  
10 ment of Iran, including its treatment of the  
11 Bahá'í community and other religious minori-  
12 ties, as a significant factor in the development  
13 of relations between the United States and  
14 Iran;

15 (C) urge the Government of Iran to eman-  
16 cipate the Bahá'í community by granting those  
17 rights guaranteed by the Universal Declaration  
18 of Human Rights, adopted and proclaimed by  
19 the United Nations General Assembly Resolu-  
20 tion 217(A)(III) of December 10, 1984, and  
21 other international covenants on human rights;  
22 and

23 (D) cooperate with international organiza-  
24 tions, including the United Nations and its  
25 agencies, in efforts to protect the religious

1 rights of the Bahá'ís and other minorities  
2 through joint appeals to the Government of  
3 Iran; and

4 (8) calls upon the President to—

5 (A) initiate an active and consistent dia-  
6 logue with other governments who are influen-  
7 tial with Iran in order to persuade the Govern-  
8 ment of Iran to rectify its human rights prac-  
9 tices; and

10 (B) urge the European Union to use its re-  
11 lationship with Iran to address and advance  
12 these fundamental human rights issues.

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